Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraphs [0039] and [0041] with the following paragraphs:

[0039] The peer interface 330 interfaces to others peers in the system. As shown in Figure 1, this peer may be a peer in the same ring, at a lower level and at a higher level. The peer interface 330 may also interface to peers in different rings at the same level, either lower level or higher level. Also as discussed above, the peer interface 330 may use the peer interface module 146 or may be implemented as a separate component using hardware, software or a combination of hardware and software. The peer interface 330 forwards the request to search for the target peer to a peer at the lower level or a peer at the upper level when the target peer is not located in the cache 310. In one embodiment, the peer interface 330 forwards the request only to a peer at the upper level that is connected to the current peer 120. The peer interface 330 includes a lower interface 332 and an upper interface 336.

[0041] The upper interface 336 interfaces to peers at the upper level that are connected to the current peer 120. These upper peers in ring {I...J} may be in the same ring or in different rings. The upper interface 336 forwards the request to at least one of these upper peers to search for the target peer when the target peer is not located in the cache 310. The upper interface 336 also receives the request from one of these upper peers to search for the target peer. When this occurs, the upper interface 336 passes the request to the peer locator 320 for carrying out the search task.